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THADDEUS J. WILLIAMS

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**BOLDLY BREAKING THE
TEN COMMANDMENTS
OF SELF-WORSHIP**



THE AGE OF ANXIETY

Understanding Our Cultural Moment and What Comes Next

Dr. Thaddeus J. Williams

Western culture has been through an Age of Faith, an Age of Enlightenment, and Age of Science, and so on. What label best describes our present age? Perhaps the Age of the Screen to capture how, like no age prior, we live much of our conscious lives on glowing rectangles. Perhaps the Age of the Gavel to express the ubiquitous judgmentalism, cancellations, and holier-than-thou attitudes have supplanted meaningful discourse, especially on social media. Perhaps the Age of Polarization to express just how incapable many have become of seeing any insight or moral value whatsoever in the opposing political party. There is truth in all of those.

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor [prefers](#) the moniker of “the Age of Authenticity” to express that being true to ourselves has become the highest goal in the West. Princeton’s Robert George [has called it](#) the “Age of Feeling.” Both philosophers are correct to point out that allegiance to our emotions, the idea that reality should be conformed to our subjective feelings rather than our ancestors’ idea that we could conform our feelings to objective reality. For most of human history, feelings were the kind of things that could be embraced, resisted, ignored, celebrated, chastened, silenced, trained, or challenged. Our ancestors could do a whole lot with their emotions. The freedom of our day is far more limiting. You have one option when it comes to your heart—follow it. Anyone who tells you otherwise is a bigot, a phobic, a hater, or worse yet, a Republican.

Given the unprecedented authority granted to emotion in our day, it is accurate to describe this as “the Age of Feeling.” Blended Scotch is for “heart followers only,” as a recent ad tells us to “follow your heart with Cutty Sark.” An ad for a Sony soundbar targets those who “only follow the instructions of their heart.” Then there are the children’s songs. In Disney’s *Mulan* soundtrack, Stevie Wonder catechizes young impressionable minds, “Don’t think so much.... You must be true to your heart. Your heart can tell you no lies....” Packed auditoriums of adolescents, hands outstretched in worship-pose, sing in unison with pop star JoJo Siwa (who recently [came out](#) as “technically pansexual”), “No-No-Nobody can change me, change me. I follow my own lead. Once you get to know me you’ll see, got all these emotions, they’re guiding every moment.”

Our Age of Feeling is hardly stable. It is collapsing all around us into what indie ensemble, Arcade Fire, have branded in the opening track of [their latest album](#) as



“the Age of Anxiety.” [Anxiety disorders](#) now effect a whopping one-third of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18. Before 2009, 37% of students who visited university counseling centers cited [anxiety as their problem](#). By 2016, the percentage jumped to 51% and continues to climb. In 2020 the American Psychological Association declared “[A National Mental Health Crisis.](#)” Chapman University recently [released](#) its annual Survey on American Fear, with fear of corrupt government officials topping the list with 4 out of 5 Americans. Over half of Americans fear pollution, cyber-terrorism, economic collapse, the pandemic, civil unrest, illness, and death.

It is no accident that the Age of Feeling is giving way to the Age of Anxiety. Sure, there are many contributing factors—the alienation and losses incurred by the pandemic, coddling parenting styles built on the false premise of human fragility (as Jonathan Haidt [has argued](#)), the world-shrinking effects of social media that bombard us with terrible global news at an unprecedented pace, political upheaval, and more. But, believe there is a more profound theological reason that the Age of Feeling turns to an Age of Anxiety. We are creatures and not the Creator. We were never designed to bear the impossible weight of creating and sustaining our identities. That is a God-sized task, and whenever we elevate ourselves to supreme status, playing God, anxiety inevitably spikes.

If history is any teacher, then a culture-wide anxiety crisis is nothing to take lightly. It primes a culture to enter ages of political totalitarianism, ideological violence, shallow escapism, and other gloomy outcomes. Speaking of another “major watershed in history, equal in importance to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance,” Alexander Solzhenitsyn closed his famous 1978 Harvard commencement with the poignant words, “It will demand from us a spiritual blaze.... No one on earth has any other way left but—upward.” Amen. Rather than watching passively as our Age of Feeling and Anxiety devolves into ages of totalitarianism and chaos, let us work and pray toward a coming Age of Revival centered on the Lord Jesus Christ.



THE HOPELESS TRADITIONALISM OF THE MTV MUSIC AWARDS

Dr. Thaddeus J. Williams

On August 22, 2022, while most of us were going about our lives, the MTV Music Awards aired from Newark, New Jersey. True to form, the awards had their fair share of hypersexualized exhibitionism. Entertainers who pride themselves on representing the *avant garde*, the progressive trendsetters, tried their best to embody the exciting boundary-breaking possibilities that lie ahead if only we should shed the outdated mores of a more repressive era.

Actor Billy Eichner took the mic to promote his upcoming rom-com featuring a gay couple. After berating Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas as a “homophobe,” Eichner declared “We are not letting them drag us back into the last century. Because they are in the past and [his movie] is the future.”

Benito Ocasio, stage name “Bad Bunny,” the first Latin star to win Artist of the Year, stuck to the sexually progressive script by kissing both a male and female backup dancer during his performance. As Ocasio said in a 2020 interview, “everyone is free to see [sex] as they want and do it with whoever they want, however they want, with infinite possibilities.”

Former Disney star Dove Cameron dedicated her award to “all of the queer kids who don’t feel that they can take up space and inhabit the fullness of who they are.” This was hardly original. Twenty-five years ago, Ellen DeGeneres declared during her Emmy acceptance speech, “I accept this on behalf of all people, and the teen-agers out there especially, who think there is something wrong with them because they are gay. There’s nothing wrong with you. Don’t ever let anybody make you feel ashamed of who you are.”

Baylor University philosopher Francis Beckwith dubs this “passive aggressive tyranny.” “The trick,” says Beckwith, “is to sound ‘passive’ and accepting of ‘diversity’ while at the same time putting forth an aggressively partisan agenda and implying that those who disagree are not only stupid but also harmful.”

Beckwith offers a thought experiment that reveals the double-standard of most mainstream award shows. “Imagine if a conservative Christian Emmy-award winner had said, ‘I accept this on behalf of all people, and the teen-agers out there especially, who think there is something wrong with them because they believe that human beings are made for a purpose and that purpose includes the building of community with its



foundation being heterosexual monogamy. There's nothing wrong with you. Don't ever let anybody, especially television script writers, make you feel ashamed because of what you believe is true about reality.' Beckwith concludes that "an award winner who made this speech would be denounced as narrow, bigoted, and intolerant. That person could expect never again to work in Hollywood." In short, the kind of sexual expressive individualism preached from the stages of award shows is hardly as open-minded and inclusive as it claims to be.

But that is not the only hypocrisy on display at such spectacles. Entertainers and influencers love to market their libertine views as something innovative, edgy, and forward thinking. The tacit invitation is for viewers to join them in their new and courageous revolt against traditional and conventional values. The truth is that there is nothing new or innovative about the dogmas spewed by Eisner, Ocasio, and Cameron. They can be found in the sexual ideologies of men like Michel Foucault, John Money, Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, and Alfred Kinsey. They can be traced from Jean-Paul Sartre back to Fredrick Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Marquis de Sade, and Romantics like Oscar Wilde and Percy Shelley. How many progressive performers realize when they take the mic that they are doing little more than regurgitating the doctrines of dead white men?

But the notion that we should create and act out our own identities has a far more ancient pedigree. The serpent of Genesis 3:5 argued that we can become "like God, knowing good and evil." That is, we can be our own sovereign meaning-makers, answerable to no one. The self-definition and expressive individualism heralded at Award shows represents what is literally the most ancient and worn out ideology known to man. We cannot ascribe to it without becoming regressive, uber-traditionalists. It is hardly as cutting edge or unconventional as it seems.

It follows from this that our perceptions could use a good re-calibration. Picture The Doors' Jim Morrison, a pioneer of on-stage boundary breaking antics. Most people memorialize Morrison as a kind of visionary lothario, untamable, courageously pointing us toward a higher state of consciousness by dropping his trousers and defiling tradition. The truth is, in light of Genesis 3, we might just as well think of Morrison as an uptight church lady with an imposing perm. His strict obedience to the millennia-old code of a preachy snake made him an uber-traditionalist.

Or take the celebrated drag Queen RuPaul, who has won no less than 40 prestigious awards in the entertainment industry. As he put it in [an interview](#) with *Time*, "Drag has always served a purpose. We mock identity. We're shape-shifters. We are God in drag. And that's our role to remind people of that." The promise of becoming gods who can shapeshift and create new identities by our own willpower? That's so 6000 B.C. or 6 million B.C. depending on your cosmology. Either way, it's hardly cutting edge.



Many influencers in the entertainment industry are so aggressively judgmental of anyone who rejects their orthodoxies that they make Westboro Baptists look tolerant. They are so dedicated to what is literally the oldest deceptive dogma of the human race that they make boomers look *avant garde*. If we want to be true nonconformists, then we must live authentically before the truth that God is God, that He is the sovereign meaning-maker, and we are not. Within that Creator-creature distinction we find true freedom, not the destructive bondage to our sexual whims falsely advertised as freedom at award shows.



THE SCANDALOUS SEVEN:

WHO'S REALLY TEACHING OUR CHILDREN ABOUT SEX?

Dr. Thaddeus J. Williams

Imagine appointing an arson to serve as the city fire chief, a flat-earther to run the Royal Astronomical Society, or a reckless driver with multiple DUIs to man the wheel of the children's school bus. Something equally if not more foolhardy has occurred in recent years in sex education.

In the name of such education, children are routinely exposed to cartoonish characters like the Genderbread Person so they can learn that their anatomical sex is different from their gender identity, gender expression, and attraction. Such doctrines are dutifully recited to children by educators whose own undergraduate and graduate education was most likely infused with radical gender ideology. Where did the ideology so many teachers pass on to our sons and daughters originate? Who were its architects, its visionaries, its founding fathers? Did they have some kind of staggering sexual expertise and sterling resumes to qualify them to shape the curriculum for entire generations? Let's meet the cast of characters. (Note: many teachers will have likely not read the works of the following men, but have imbibed their dogmas, even if they are unaware of their origin.)

Alfred Kinsey (1894-1956) authored *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and the *Human Female* (1953), which have been ranked with Marx's *Communist Manifesto* and Darwin's *Origin of Species* in terms of massive cultural impact. It was the Bible of the Sexual Revolution. Kinsey was one of the first to argue that gender is non-binary. He invented the "Kinsey Scale of Gender Fluidity" based on interviews with over a thousand sex offenders and pedophiles. He loathed monogamous heterosexuality as oppressive.

What are his credentials as an authority on human sexuality? He advocated bestiality, incest, pedophilia, and sadomasochism. Kinsey's research indisputably included the sexual abuse of minors. Table 34 of his first volume features his findings on "multiple orgasms in pre-pubescent males," including how many times pedophiles could bring babies, including two-month-old infants, to sexual climax. In his second volume Kinsey argued, "The adult contacts are a source of pleasure to some children, and sometimes may arouse the child erotically and bring it to orgasm. It is difficult to understand why a child, except for its cultural conditioning, should be disturbed at having its genitalia touched." Kinsey testified before legislatures that "pedophilia was a less dangerous problem than the public intolerance of it." Instead of proper disgust, Indiana University built a bronze statue of Kinsey in 2022 to demonstrate "the university's pride in the living legacy of [his] research..." and their Kinsey Institute's "commitment to equity regarding sexual diversity established by Kinsey's research."

Then there was Austrian Marxist **Wilhelm Reich** (1897-1957), author of *The Function of the Orgasm* (1927). Reich coined the term "Sexual Revolution," promoting if-it-feels-good-do-it sexual expressivism to achieve liberation from oppression, a running theme behind today's sex ed. Like Kinsey, he viewed monogamous heterosexual sex as an evil relic of religion. What are his credentials to inform our children's view of sex? Reich battled recurring psychosis. He practiced "vegatotherapy," which included giving "massages" to naked patients, including children. He had multiple affairs, defended pedophilia, and died in prison.

The Frenchman **Michel Foucault**, author of *The History of Sexuality* (1976, followed by three more volumes) is considered the godfather of the queer theory being advanced in much of contemporary education. He advanced the idea that "heteronormativity" is a power structure that must be deconstructed by the pursuit of subversive sexual identities and pleasures? His credentials to shape children? He argued for "consensual" sex between adults and children, campaigning to legalize pedophilia and abolish age of consent laws in France. When relocated to Berkeley, California, Foucault threw himself enthusiastically into the sadomasochistic homosexual scene of San Francisco including "gagging, piercing, cutting, electric-shocking, stretching on racks, imprisoning, branding." He contracted HIV/AIDS and, like Queen's Freddy Mercury, continued to gratify his sexual appetites even after he knew he was infected. When Foucault said, "Sex is worth dying for," he practiced what he preached, not only for himself but for unsuspecting others.

Harry Benjamin (1885-1986), author of *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966) is another voice echoed in sex ed curriculae. Benjamin championed today's ubiquitous dogma that "the mind of the transsexual cannot be adjusted to the body... We must adjust the body to the mind," making him the forefather of gender ideology and reassignment surgery. Should we rank him a hero or villain? Benjamin experimented on children's bodies, causing irreversible damage to many. He was undeterred when his research assistant endocrinologist Charles Ihlenfeld revealed, "There is too much unhappiness among people who have had the surgery... Too many end in suicide."

A fellow pioneer of doing irreversible damage to children's bodies, **John Money** (1931-2006) authored *Gay, Straight, and In Between* (1988). Money coined the term "gender identity" in 1967. For Money, and the countless educators parroting his doctrines as gospel truth, gender is a mere social construct and purely subjective phenomenon. He promoted and practiced hormone treatment and gender reassignment surgeries for children. Is this the kind of person we would want shaping children's understanding of their bodies?

In the infamous Reimer case, Money made six-year-old twins strip and simulate sex with one another. He showed them pornography and inflicted sexual abuse on them. The Reimer case, which Money hailed as confirmation of his theories, was cited again and again to prove that gender is purely social and malleable, divorced from biology. These are now entrenched dogmas in sexual education, based largely on Money's long debunked evidence. Both the Reimer twins later tragically committed suicide. Should a man who falsified research, defended pedophilia, personally inflicted sexual abuse on children have his notions about sex passed on to children?








Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), the father of French existentialism and author of *Existentialism and Human Emotion* (1957), laid the philosophical framework for much of today's sexual education. Inverting Aristotle and the Bible, Sartre argued that "existence precedes essence," meaning we just exist without any built-in meaning and we get to create our own meaning through an act of subjective willpower. This is the philosophical foundation of today's transgender and queer theories. What are his credentials we may ask. Sartre was a notorious womanizer. For him, sex was about "the sadistic conquest of another." Like other sex ed icons, Sartre campaigned for pedophilia, signing a vile 1977 petition seeking to abolish age of consent laws in France.

Lastly, comes one of Sartre's biggest fans, **Jacques Derrida** (1930-2004), author of *Speech and Phenomena* (1967) and fellow signer of the petition to legalize pedophilia. Derrida inspired today's gender and queer theories by deconstructing language as an oppressive power play. He/she, man/woman, male/female are false binaries, tools of "subordination." We must "disorganize the inherited order" by "trashing" such binaries. Are these the notions of someone with credibility about sex? Derrida described himself as "a horrible Mediterranean macho man." Two of his sons disowned him for his many infidelities. He coerced more than one lover to have an abortion against her will. He refused to acknowledge the existence of the love-child of one of his many affairs.

Isn't it an unfair *ad hominem* attack to write off these men's research based on their personal lives? No more than citing a long rap sheet of reckless and drunk driving to disqualify someone from manning the steering wheel of the children's school bus.

Why are we allowing such men who failed so atrociously at realizing a truly beautiful and flourishing vision of human sexuality to have any influence over how we and our children think about sex? If you don't want the likes of Kinsey, Reich, Foucault, Benjamin, Money, Sartre, and Derrida—the scandalous seven—shaping your children's view of human sexuality, then now is the time to speak up. Demand access to your children's sex ed curriculum. Ask teachers and administrators what steps they have taken to ensure that the ideology of pedophiles and deviants does not come within 100 miles of your children's classrooms. Demand answers. "Take no part in fruitless deeds of darkness, but instead expose them."

MEET THE MEN WHO INSPIRED THE GENDER IDEOLOGY BEING TAUGHT TO TODAY'S CHILDREN

CAST OF CHARACTERS	ALFRED KINSEY 1894-1956	WILHELM REICH 1897-1957	MICHEL FOUCAULT 1926-1984	HARRY BENJAMIN 1885-1986	JOHN MONEY 1921-2006	JEAN-PAUL SARTRE 1905-1980	JACQUES DERRIDA 1930-2004
							
	<i>SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE HUMAN MALE/FEMALE</i> (1948/53)	<i>THE FUNCTION OF THE ORGASM</i> (1927)	<i>THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY</i> (1976)	<i>THE TRANSEXUAL PHENOMENON</i> (1966)	<i>GAY, STRAIGHT, and IN BETWEEN</i> (1988)	<i>EXISTENTIALISM AND HUMAN EMOTION</i> (1957)	<i>SPEECH AND PHENOMENA</i> (1967)
	ARGUED THAT SEXUALITY IS FLUID AND GENDER IS NON-BINARY. INVENTED KINSEY SCALE OF GENDER FLUIDITY BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH OVER 1000 SEX OFFENDERS AND PEDOPHILES. LOATHED MONOGAMOUS HETEROSEXUALITY AS OPPRESSIVE.	COINED THE TERM "SEXUAL REVOLUTION," PROMOTING "IF IT FEELS GOOD, DO IT" SEXUAL EXPRESSIVISM TO ACHIEVE LIBERATION FROM REPRESSION. VIEWED MONOGAMOUS HETEROSEXUAL SEX AS AN EVIL RELIC OF RELIGION.	CONSIDERED THE GOD-FATHER OF QUEER THEORY. HE ADVANCED THE IDEA THAT HETERONORMATIVITY IS A POWER STRUCTURE THAT MUST BE DECONSTRUCTED BY THE PURSUIT OF SUBVERSIVE SEXUAL IDENTITIES AND PLEASURES.	CHAMPIONED TODAY'S DOGMA THAT "THE MIND OF THE TRANSEXUAL CANNOT BE ADJUSTED TO THE BODY... WE MUST ADJUST THE BODY TO THE MIND," MAKING HIM A FOREFATHER OF GENDER IDEOLOGY AND REASSIGNMENT SURGERY.	COINED THE TERM "GENDER IDENTITY" IN 1967. BELIEVED GENDER WAS A MERE SOCIAL CONSTRUCT AND PURELY SUBJECTIVE PHENOMENA. PROMOTED AND PRACTICED HORMONE TREATMENT AND GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERIES FOR CHILDREN.	ARGUED THAT "MAN IS NOTHING ELSE BUT WHAT HE MAKES HIMSELF." THE EXISTENTIALIST DOCTRINE OF SUBJECTIVE SELF-DEFINITION THAT FORMS THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF TODAY'S TRANSGENDER AND QUEER THEORIES.	INSPIRED QUEER THEORY BY DECONSTRUCTING LANGUAGE AS AN OPPRESSIVE POWER-PLAY. HE/SHE, MAN/WOMAN ARE FALSE BINARIES, TOOLS OF SUBORDINATION. WE MUST "DISORGANIZE THE INHERITED ORDER" BY "TRASHING" SUCH BINARIES.
FACTS	SEXUALLY ABUSED MINORS IN HIS RESEARCH, INCLUDING "MULTIPLE ORGASMS IN PRE-PUBESCENT MALES," FALSIFIED RESEARCH, ADVOCATED BESTIALITY, INCEST, PEDOPHILIA AND SADOMASOCHISM.	BATTLED RECURRING PSYCHOSIS, PRACTICED "VEGATOTHERAPY," "MASSAGING" NAKED PATIENTS, INCLUDING CHILDREN. HAD MULTIPLE AFFAIRS. DEFENDED PEDOPHILIA. DIED IN PRISON.	SUICIDAL. ARGUED FOR "CONSENSUAL" SEX BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN. CAMPAIGNED TO LEGALIZE PEDOPHILIA IN FRANCE. PRACTICED SADO-MASOCHISTIC SEX/TORTURE. TRAGICALLY, DIED OF HIV.	EXPERIMENTED ON CHILDREN'S BODIES, UNDETERRED WHEN HIS RESEARCH ASSISTANT REVEALED, "THERE IS TOO MUCH UNHAPPINESS AMONG PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD THE SURGERY... TOO MANY END IN SUICIDE."	MADE 6-YEAR-OLD TWINS STRIP AND SIMULATE SEX. SHOWED THEM PORNOGRAPHY, AND SEXUALLY ABUSED THEM (BOTH LATER KILLED THEMSELVES). FALSIFIED RESEARCH. DEFENDED PEDOPHILIA.	NOTORIOUS WOMANIZER FOR WHOM SEX WAS ABOUT "THE SADISTIC CONQUEST OF ANOTHER." HOOKED ON AMPHETIMINES. CAMPAIGNED FOR PEDOPHILIA. DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS "GAGA... I'M NOT STUPID, BUT I'M EMPTY."	DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS "A HORRIBLE MEDITERRANEAN MACHO MAN." SONS DISOWNED HIM FOR HIS MANY INFIDELITIES. COERCED LOVERS TO HAVE ABORTIONS. REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE EXISTENCE OF A LOVE-CHILD.
SOURCES	Alfred Kinsey, <i>Sexual Behavior in the Human Male</i> (1948) <i>Female</i> (1953). Judith A. Reisman, <i>Kinsey, Sex, & Fraud</i> (1990). <i>Stolen Honor, Stolen Innocence</i> (2013). Arno Karlen, <i>Sexuality and Homosexuality</i> (1971). Gary F. Kelly, <i>America's Sexual Transformation</i> (2012). "An Interview with John Money." <i>Paika: The Journal of Pedophilia</i> (Spring 1991). "John Money, Gender Role, Gender Identity, Core Gender Identity, Usage and Definition of Terms," <i>Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis</i> (1973). John Money, ed., <i>Sex Research Recent Developments</i> (1965). <i>Sex Unknown</i> , NOVA (PBS October 30, 2001). Gina Loudon, "The Dark, Untold Story of Transgenderism," <i>World Net Daily</i> (June 5, 2015). Wilhelm Reich, <i>Die Sexualität im Kulturkampf</i> (1936). Michael Walsh, <i>The Devil's Pleasure Paradise</i> (2017). Warren Ward, <i>Lovers of Philosophy: How the Intimate Lives of Seven Philosophers Shaped Modern Thought</i> (2022). Jean-Paul Sartre, <i>Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre</i> , Ed. Kaufman (1975). Michel Foucault, "Sexuality, Morality, and the Law," in <i>Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and Other Writings</i> , Tr. Alan Sheridan (1988). Roger Kimball, "The Perversions of M. Foucault," <i>The New Criterion</i> (March 1993). Renee Baker, "50 years later: Remembering Harry Benjamin and the transsexual phenomenon" <i>Dallas Voice</i> (Nov 18, 2016). Nothing in this infographic should be interpreted to justify anything but love for image-bearers of God who identify as LGBTQ. Rather it is intended as an educational tool to help us understand the origins of the dogmas about human sexuality currently being endorsed in education, entertainment, and media.						

BEYOND CAPES AND COWBELLS:

How a Christian Approach to Law and Virtue Transcends both Autonomy and Authoritarianism

Dr. Thaddeus J. Williams

Law often functions as the proverbial executioner's sword to deter unlawful action. But can it also serve as a sculptor's chisel to help form a more virtuous public? A positive answer to that question has a long and diverse pedigree in Western culture. For Aristotle, a "chief concern of political science is to endue the citizens with certain qualities, namely virtue and the readiness to do fine deeds."¹ Aquinas spoke of "legal justice," which "commands the virtues... [and] draws them all into the service of the common good."² John Calvin viewed lawmakers as "the ordained guardians and vindicators of public innocence, modesty, honour, and tranquility" (which Calvin calls "virtues" in the very next breath).³ For John Locke, "God [has] by an inseparable connexion joined virtue and public happiness together and made the practice [of virtue] necessary to the preservation of society."⁴ Adam Smith envisioned the "civil magistrate" as "entrusted with the power not only of preserving the public peace by restraining injustice, but of promoting the prosperity of the commonwealth, by establishing good discipline, and by discouraging every sort of vice."⁵ Examples could be multiplied of a strong and discernable stream flowing through Western jurisprudence in which law has some *aretegenic* force (*arête* = virtue; *genic* = creating or producing).⁶

THE NOMONEUTRALITY OBJECTION

While the legal minds above spell out significant limitations, pitfalls, and cautions with regard to law's virtue-producing force,⁷ they would likely be perplexed by our contemporary *zeitgeist* in which public virtue considerations scarcely enter into matters of law and policy-making. What is the effect of legislation *x* not only on the kind of behaviors we engage in, but more deeply, on the kind of people we are becoming as a society? Does this or that law add further momentum to our internal vicious propensities, or redirect our hearts toward virtuous states like self-control, courage, and charity? Does that public policy contribute to a cultural atmosphere that is conducive or hostile to citizens' virtue formation? Such questions, which had a place in the Western legal tradition for the majority of its history, are seldom asked today. They have been



eclipsed by other factors that we weigh more heavily in public discourse, be it economic calculus, political special interests, personal autonomy, or rights talk.

Indeed, if Aristotle, Aquinas, and company were to time travel and tour the 21st century law school circuit, their aretegenic perspectives on law would likely be met with puzzlement, suspicion, and perhaps even antipathy. Connecting law to virtue could be interpreted as a heretical deviation from a cherished, cardinal dogma that law must be morally neutral. It would obliterate the kind of freedom that those in Western societies hold dear; namely, the existential vision of freedom famously redefined by Justice Kennedy as “the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life” (*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*). Allowing the law to advance the cause of virtue would imperialistically encroach upon the

individual's now sacred and sovereign freedom to define his or her own private moral universe. It would amount to what D.A.J. Richards calls a “brutal and callous impersonal manipulation by the state of intimate personal life.”⁸ Let us call this “the nomoneutrality objection,” which stems from the widespread conviction that law (*nomos*) should be neutral on moral matters in order to preserve the individual's freedom of moral self-definition. As Benjamin Wiker observes:

...the liberal state does not define law in terms of the promotion of virtue and the prohibition of vice, but in terms of the protection and promotion of individual private pleasures, which—since all such pleasures are natural— are declared to be rights. Any limitation of these “rights” is considered unjust.⁹

How might we answer the nomoneutrality objection? The objection itself evokes important distinctions, helping us more meaningfully parse out ways in which law should and should not advance virtue goals. We will close with insights from a Christian view of human nature that hold significant promise for keeping law's aretegenic role from turning vicious. In short, a Christian anthropology offers a humanizing *tertium quid* between the severe fragmentation of moral self-definition on the one side and heavy-handed, moralistic legal agendas on the other.

THE LOGICAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF NOMONEUTRALITY

What are we to make of the objection that law must be morally neutral to preserve the individual's freedom to create his or her own moral values? This objection is not a philosophical abstraction from a fictional interlocutor. Ronald Dworkin has famously argued against morals legislation on the basis of nomoneutrality. For Dworkin, “political



decisions must be, as far as possible, independent of any particular conception of the good life or of what gives life value."¹⁰ He bases nomoneutrality, which he calls "the principle of equality," on "the right to moral independence," which jointly entail that governments must treat competing moral visions with "equal concern and respect."¹¹ Likewise, Richards defends "the fundamental liberal imperative of *moral neutrality with regard to the many disparate visions of the good life*."¹²

This appeal to nomoneutrality is by no means confined to the ivory towers. It represents one of the most popular and powerful law-shaping doctrines in American politics over the last four decades. Public opinion can often be galvanized against a policy simply by painting that policy in a moral light, portraying its supporters as moralistic zealots seeking to legalistically impose their personal morality at the expense of everyone else's liberty. This style of nomoneutral argument (often couched in legal terms as a violation of the 'right to privacy') is, of course, anything but neutral. It gains popular traction only by making an appeal to a *moral* sense, not that the opposed piece of morals legislation is merely inconvenient, impractical, or distasteful, but *wrong*.

Critics of nomoneutrality have repeatedly exposed this problem empirically, citing a vast litany of cases in which the champions of neutrality violate their most precious, defining principle. As William Galston remarked, "every contemporary liberal theory that begins by promising to do without a substantive theory of the good ends by betraying that promise."¹³ Can we demonstrate that nomoneutrality is not only violated in practice, but also, on a deeper level, that it violates fundamental laws of logic? To develop such a logical case, picture the kind of morals legislation that nomoneutralists find so objectionable as follows:

Morals Legislation: $A^1 > A^2$

Morals legislation places a greater-than sign ($>$) between rival actions (A^1 and A^2). For the advocate of aretegenic law this greater-than symbol does not represent one action being more economically efficient than another, having more social utility, or comporting more with the moral legislator's own private whims. Rather, it expresses the law's slant toward one act over another on account of that act's superior *moral* value. For example, the law ought to reflect the fundamental moral superiority of minimizing the spread of pornography over the vicious results of allowing pornography to flow unimpeded through all levels of society. The greater-than sign, in this scenario, opens toward minimizing the spread of pornography.



Nomoneutrality, by contrast, places an equal sign between rival acts (i.e., Dworkin's 'principle of equality'). The law, on this view, may prefer or deter acts based on their economic consequences, social palatability, or other factors, but not for *moral* reasons. The law must hang in judgment-free equipoise between rival actions in order to preserve the individuals' autonomy to create their own greater-than symbols when constructing their private moral universes (i.e., Dworkin's 'right to moral independence'). And so we reach the following formula of nomoneutrality:

$$\text{Nomoneutral Legislation: } A^1 = A^2$$

It is easy to see how these distinct formulas are likely to generate very different results when inputting questions of pornography legislation.¹⁴ What happens, however, if we input the act of nomoneutral legislation itself on one hand and the act of morals legislation on the other? What symbol, we may ask, does the proponent of neutrality wish to place between these rival actions? To state the obvious, nomoneutralists place a greater-than sign between their own acts to realize greater nomoneutrality in law and the acts of the privacy invading, moralistic zealots they oppose.¹⁵ Thus, nomoneutrality takes this form:

$$\text{Nomoneutral Legislation} > \text{Morals Legislation}$$

This iteration of nomoneutrality is, of course, just another case of our old morals legislation formula in which $A^1 > A^2$. This greater-than symbol opens toward nomoneutral legislation not because morals legislation is considered economically inefficient or pragmatically undesirable, but because morals legislation is deemed *morally* inferior (i.e., a *wrongful* violation of liberty, privacy, autonomy, etc.). Yet as this greater-than sign opens up toward nomoneutral legislation it promptly chomps down and swallows neutrality whole. Why? Because that greater-than sign reveals that nomoneutrality *is itself a form of morals legislation*. Nomoneutrality entails that nomoneutral legislation is not *morally equal to* but *morally superior to* systems that posit moral superiority. It is a moral position seeking to enshrine itself as law, which states that no moral positions should be enshrined as law. As an attempt to legally enshrine a moral position, nomoneutrality slides to the other side of the greater-than symbol, making it morally inferior to itself:

$$\text{Nomoneutral Legislation} > \text{Nomoneutral Legislation}$$

What this reveals, on closer inspection, is that nomoneutrality does not and *cannot* exist—and therefore, cannot stand as a meaningful objection to aretegenic law.



We may better appreciate the depth of this problem with help from the first law in the canons of logic, the law of identity. The law of identity states that $A=A$. Nothing that exists or could possibly exist can be greater than itself (i.e., given the law of identity, $A>A$ represents an *a priori* logical impossibility). By claiming moral superiority to systems that claim moral superiority, nomoneutrality becomes even greater than itself, rendering its existence no more possible than that of a four-sided triangle. This observation becomes all the more problematic when we consider how vehemently many nomoneutralists object to any piece of morals legislation that they see as inspired by theism. From the perspective of such nomoneutralists, legislation should not be based on some non-existent entity. If the above analysis is on target then the nomoneutralist does precisely that, seeking to legislate on the basis of a fictional entity that not only *does not*, but logically *cannot*, exist.

Yet demonstrating that nomoneutrality cannot exist in a world where the fundamental laws of logic apply, of course, does not mean that such a principle cannot exist in the world of politics. In politics, nomoneutrality is frequently applied (albeit selectively) as it suits the inescapably morals-laden legislative agenda of the one appealing to nomoneutrality. Examples abound in which the rally cry, "Keep morality out of law!" becomes a political euphemism for "I want to keep *your* morality out of law, so I can get mine in!"¹⁶ And so nomoneutrality finally reduces to this:

My Morals Legislation > Your Morals Legislation

J. Budziszewski expounds:

Liberals...came to insist that the laws of the state must be justified in a way that is independent not only of theology and ontology, but of 'one's conception of the good'. Because this is impossible, what happens in practice is that their own views of the good prevail without challenge, just by pretending that they aren't really views of the good.¹⁷

In short, nomoneutrality is a logically self-destructive fiction, albeit a useful fiction when trying to marginalize opponents as moral oppressors while painting your own morally charged agenda in innocuous colors to sway a pluralistic culture. It is a thinly veiled power play.



FROM COWBELLS TO CAPES (AND BACK AGAIN): NIETZSCHE'S LEGACY

Friedrich Nietzsche, whose philosophy represents a celebration of power, helps us to deepen this critique of noneutrality. He reveals how a rejection of traditional morality renders one not only *not* neutral with regard to moral *acts* (i.e., what we should *do*), but also an advocate for some deeper virtue agenda at the level of *agency* (i.e., who we should *become*). Nietzsche is perhaps most famous for taking the iconoclast's hammer to the concept of an objective moral structure in which human beings flourish. He deconstructed the classical, and particularly the *Christian* virtues. "What herd morality deems 'good' is not real virtue but merely a disguise for weakness."¹⁸ Yet Nietzsche's philosophy does not end up floating in a void of moral neutrality. Rather, he created *ex nihilo* and inhabited his own moral universe, populated with both virtuous heroes (e.g., Wagner before his conversion to Christianity) and vicious villains (e.g., Wagner after his conversion to Christianity). Nietzsche calls us beyond the slave morality of a meek Christianity to embrace a strong-willed Master morality (*Herrenmoral*). His heroic Zarathustra declares that "herds, herdsman, and corpses [that is, those who follow traditional morality] hate most...him who breaketh up their table of values, the breaker, the lawbreaker...the creating ones who engrave new values on new tables."¹⁹ Note well that Nietzsche's table-breakers are also table-makers. The demolition men who take a sledgehammer to the old system of virtue are subsequently architects who dream up an edifice of "new values." In Nietzsche's words, "The new, would the noble man create, and a new virtue."²⁰

Elsewhere Nietzsche's Zarathustra clarifies the nature and origin of this "new virtue": "Power is it, this new virtue.... When ye are exalted above praise and blame, and your will would command all things, as a loving [of your own] will: there is the origin of your virtue."²¹ It is telling that one of the most vitriolic critics of teleological views of human morality and flourishing champions his own moral teleology (even, at times, slipping back into the very virtues he sought to demolish²²). Nietzsche speaks teleologically of the human "course between animal and Superman" and "the three metamorphoses of the spirit," how "the spirit became a camel, the camel, the lion, and the lion at last a child."²³ In this process of Nietzschean virtue formation we move from "camel"—man as "load-bearing spirit" burdened by the moral demands of humility, altruism, love for enemies, etc.—to "lion,"—man who devours those moral burdens to "give a holy Nay to duty"—and onward finally to the state of "child" who plays "the game of creating new values."²⁴

It is striking how closely this teleology of Nietzsche's 19th century post-teleological man resembles 21st century liberal notions.²⁵ It is a hair's breadth between Nietzsche's call to



"let the value of everything be determined anew by you!"²⁶ and Kennedy's popular notion of liberty as "the right to define one's own concept of existence." In *Beyond Good and Evil* (prophetically subtitled *Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*), Nietzsche adds, "The noble type of man regards himself as the determiner of values... He knows that it is he himself who confers honour on things; he is the creator of values. He honours whatever he recognizes in himself: such morality is self- glorification."²⁷ Perhaps there are enough self-glorifying value-creating supermen in the 21st century to form the new herd. In Nietzsche's day it took a certain act of countercultural willpower to spurn all traditional moral expectations in order to do your own thing. Becoming a superman meant risking life in a fortress of solitude (as it certainly did for Nietzsche himself). In our day, by contrast, shunning traditional morality in order to create your own values is hardly risky or countercultural. You are given a warm welcome into the herd. The 19th century European superman must trade his cape for a cowbell if he continues to champion self-determined value in the 21st century. Conversely, resisting the herd's push toward self-definition and self-glorification requires the very kind of subversive feat of will that Nietzsche applauded. The 19th century cow becomes a 21st century superman.

THE INEVITABLE MORAL PEDAGOGY OF LAW

What the foregoing analysis clarifies for our original questions concerning aretegenic law is that even the boldest deconstructions of traditional morals do not leave us in a value-free wasteland. We construct new virtue concepts on the rubble. The force of law is then invoked to do much of the heavy lifting. Legislation may no longer serve as a guiderail to help encourage us along the often-arduous path toward character states likes altruism and a "readiness to do fine deeds" (Aristotle). Rather, legislation deregulates any autonomous lifestyle choice that might be deemed morally objectionable while coercively banning any detractors from acting in accordance with their moral objections. Examples abound, as the state enters bakeries, photo studios, public restrooms, and religious institutions. Make no mistake: such legislation is *aretegenic*. It aims beyond the level of action to the level of agency. It sends a clear message about who are the virtuous heroes and the vicious villains, a message that has the force of moral pedagogy on the public. Such aretegenic law seeks to morph us, to borrow Nietzsche's categories, from camels burdened by traditional moral duties, into lions with their "holy Nay to duty" and, finally, into children playing "the game of creating new values." Such law is every bit as virtue- seeking as traditional morals legislation, though with antithetical meanings poured into the term "virtue."



Over time, such Nietzschean aretegenic legislation, while pretending to diminish state intrusion and enlarge the scope of individual liberties, has precisely the opposite cumulative impact. In the short run, new legislation has the most immediate shrinking effect on the liberties of those who seek to live out their traditional moral convictions in public life. In Nietzsche's parlance, the superman seeks to "become master over all space and to extend its force (its will to power) and to thrust back all that resists its extension."²⁸ But in the long run, the state takes on an even more imperialistic aretegenic force, even against those who share its disdain for traditional morality. Like an oscillating universe, millions of people doing their own thing expand outward from one another in growing alienation and social entropy. As society turns colder and sparser, it eventually hits a critical point when the innate longing for something more meaningful and fulfilling than self-created subjective values kicks in. Society then begins rapidly collapsing back in on itself toward a point of singularity; that is, toward an all-absorbing state. The Big Bang of autonomy, sprawling outward in all directions, is followed by a Big Crunch toward a liberty-consuming centralized authority. As Dostoevsky's Shigalev observed in *The Possessed*, "Starting from unlimited freedom I arrive at unlimited despotism." The end result is that "One-tenth enjoys absolute liberty and unbounded power over the other nine-tenths. The others have to give up all individuality and become, so to speak, a herd."²⁹ Francis Schaeffer recognized and deepened Dostoevsky's insight:

When freedoms are separated from the Christian base...they become a force of destruction leading to chaos. When this happens, as it has today, then, to quote Eric Hoffer, 'When freedom destroys order, the yearning for order will destroy freedom.' At that point the words left or right will make no difference. They are only two roads to the same end. There is no difference between an authoritarian government from the right or the left: the results are the same. An elite, an authoritarianism as such, will gradually force form on society so that it will not go on to chaos. And most people will accept it—from the desire for personal peace and affluence, from apathy, and from the yearning for order... That is just what Rome did with Caesar Augustus.³⁰

HOW ARETEGENIC LAW GOES WRONG

Retracing our steps, the west broke from a long tradition of virtue-aimed law. Legislative choices could no longer be informed by transcendent virtues, but only on the basis of a fictional entity called *nomoneutrality*. *Nomoneutral* legislation then became aretegenic—though not in the old sense as a supportive structure cooperating *alongside* (rather than *against*) individuals, families, and mediating institutions to help people become more



caring, courageous, honest, etc.³¹ Rather, with a mix of deregulating traditional moral violations and regulating against dissent, law began to recommend in powerful ways a new ideal for human progress—the self-determining superman who “creates his own values” (Nietzsche) with his new judicially invented “right to define one’s own concept of existence” (Kennedy). As the pedagogy of such law takes effect, the growing mass of self-glorifying supermen eventually reach the end of themselves, finding their own willpower to be an inadequate and ultimately unsatisfying object of worship. They finally return on all fours like a herd seeking a Great Shepherd. Enter the State, enlarged to meet an intense demand for transcendent meaning that it helped to create.

At this terminal stage, legislation no longer pretends to be *nomoneutral* and advances its aretegenic agenda more explicitly. Consider as historic examples the concepts of *pravovoe vospitanie*, or ‘legal nurturing,’ along with *pravovaia propaganda*, or ‘legal propaganda,’ which were quintessential to Soviet statecraft during the Communist era. As Harold Berman observes,

The purpose of Soviet law itself is not only to make people behave, by threat of sanctions or promise of rewards, according to official rules. It is also, and more fundamentally, to educate offenders to change their attitudes and to reinforce among nonoffenders their belief in the basic goals of Soviet society. Thus law is intended to help create the “new Soviet person.”³²

Mark Chepel, who lived in Sevastopol under Communism’s aretegenic laws for 12 years, explains the results of the State’s attempt to use law as a chisel to sculpt the “new Soviet person.” Says Chepel:

Soviet virtues were not empowering. Your sole purpose was to fulfill the Party’s goals. ‘The Party rules,’ we were told, and ‘Your destiny is in our hands.’ The message was clear: ‘If we want your car, you will give it to us; it is your contribution to a better world. No matter how unfair it may seem, it’s for your own good and the benefit of Mother Russia. You may not think this is a good thing, but it’s the best way to be human, and we know better.’³³

We can draw an important lesson from the failed Soviet experiment in aretegenic law. It is this: a policy aimed at human thriving will actually hurt people to the extent that it sprouts from an inadequate view of human nature. Skewed anthropology leads to false concepts of virtue, which, when backed by law, do not lead to human flourishing.



Instead, as law works against the grain of human nature, vice and dehumanization become the net results of a virtue-seeking system. Before Soviet communism went wrong with law and policy it had already gone wrong on the deeper questions of human nature, viewing man reductively as *homo economicus*. It diagnosed man's deepest problem as an external socio-political-economic problem, which inspired an inflated soteriological emphasis on external socio-political-economic remedies. Meanwhile, the internal human propensity to pervert power went untreated.³⁴

To further illustrate how inadequate anthropology leads to an abuse of law's aretegenic power, consider the well-intended efforts to help northern spotted owls in the forests of the northwestern United States. Environmental legislation significantly restricted the lumber industry with the aim of preserving the owls' natural habitat. As lumberjacks struggled to cope with unemployment, the forests they once cut grew denser. By some accounts, the northern spotted owls, with an average wingspan of six feet, had an increasingly difficult time navigating the crowded trees to reach the forest floor, where wood rats, their primary food source, scurried freely. With less accessible sustenance, the spotted owls populations continued to dwindle in the very forests where they were intended to thrive.³⁵ How could legal efforts toward spotted owl thriving achieve such ironic results? The answer is: *an inadequate understanding of spotted owls*. Bad 'owl-ology' leads to a false concept of owl flourishing, which in turn leads to bad policy, and, finally, the harm of the very animals that people seek to help. The lesson is clear as we seek to distinguish between virtue-aimed laws that actually promote the ethical flourishing of our species and those that morally damage the very people they seek to improve. True anthropology is a necessary condition of true aretegenic law.

TOWARD A MORE HUMANIZING ARETEGENIC LAW

It is here that a Christian worldview has volumes to speak into the public discourse on law, with tremendous potential to protect and uplift even those who may unapologetically reject Christianity. I offer five connections between Christian anthropology and aretegenic law, in hopes of inspiring further reflection and scholarship in this direction:

1. *People are not designed to be supreme authorities over the hearts of other men, and are, therefore, seriously limited in their capacity to legislatively inculcate virtue.*³⁶ Because God is sovereign, the merely human government is not. Given His unique authority and access to the human heart, God can "cause [us] to increase and abound in love" (1 Thes. 2:13), His Spirit can produce the fruits of



love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. (Gal. 5), and “mortify the deeds of the flesh” (Rom. 8:13) in ways that human law cannot. State-enforced legislation is no substitute for divinely affected heart transformation.³⁷

2. *People are designed as meaningful choice-makers, and can, therefore, be constructively encouraged but not coercively engineered to virtue.*³⁸ We are more than the sum of our biological and economic particulars. This means that any aretegenic law that treats people less as choice-makers and more like Pavlovian canines who can be socially engineered will have vicious results. Virtues like generosity and charity are what Robert George calls ‘reflexive,’ meaning that they must be chosen voluntarily and not by human coercion to retain their moral value. (This insight helps us understand why many economic policies of mass-scale forced redistribution tend to deliver so little on their promises of a more generous and charitable society).
3. *People are designed to thrive when the diverse, finite, and divinely delegated spheres of authority are left intact.* Martin Luther famously quipped that his marriage served as a far more rigorous school for character than the monastery. God has created diverse spheres and He imbued them each with mutually complementary (but not mutually cancelling) powers to realize His good vision for His creatures’ flourishing. Governments are ordained with a delegated authority “for our good,” as “the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer” (Rom. 13:4). Yet this divinely delegated aretegenic duty of government does not replace or repress the unique (and far more personal) duties of the church to disciple communities toward Christlike virtues, or the unique duties of parents to raise up children in “the way of the Lord.” This means that virtue-seeking legal systems that suppress or swallow up these far more intimate aretegenic institutions violate human nature and will turn vicious.
4. *People are morally fallen to such a radical extent that any attempt at aretegenic law (including our own) should be met with a realistic caution that reckons seriously with our enormous capacity for corruption.* This anthropological insight protects us from the naïve optimism of certain aretegenic systems that champion the inherent goodness of man and tend to turn utopian dreams into dystopian nightmares. The depth of human evil also reminds us that legislative solutions cannot resolve the most rudimentary spiritual problems within our nature.
5. *People need grace to realize their most ultimate meaning and fulfillment.* Aretegenic legislation is no substitute for the gospel. The chief end of man, as the Westminster theologians recognized, is the glorification and enjoyment of God. We cannot reach this chief end through any earthly courtroom; we reach it only



through the courtroom of heaven where Jesus intercedes as our defense attorney, seeking our “not guilty” verdict with the irrefutable case of His own shed blood (1 John 2:1-2).

From these insights we may conclude that virtue-seeking law properly informed by a true anthropology offers a hopeful alternative to both destructive autonomy and a dehumanizing authoritarianism. It may point us beyond the constricting shed of enslaved cows and the lonesome sky of self-glorifying supermen, into a public atmosphere where humans can better flourish.

¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 21.

² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ed. Mortimer Adler (Chicago, IL: William Benton, 1952), Q61, A5, p. 59.

³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, ed. John McNeill (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1496. Calvin expounds, “For in the minds of many the love of equity and justice grows cold, if due honour be not paid to virtue, and the licentiousness of the wicked cannot be restrained, without strict discipline and the infliction of punishment” (*Ibid.*, 1496-1497).

⁴ John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. J. Yolton (London: Dent, 1977), bk. 1, ch. 3, sec. 6.

⁵ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Economic Classics, 2013), pt. 2, sec. 2, ch. 1.

⁶ In Greek, *arête* means ‘virtue,’ and *genic* means ‘creating, begetting, or producing.’

⁷ In the words of Adam Smith, “Of all the duties of a lawgiver, however, this, perhaps, is that which requires the greatest delicacy and reserve to execute with propriety and judgment. To neglect it altogether exposes the commonwealth to many gross disorders and shocking enormities, and to push it too far is destructive of all liberty, security, and justice” (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pt. 2, sec. 2, ch. 1.).

⁸ D.A.J. Richards, *Toleration and the Constitution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 272.

⁹ Benjamin Wiker, *Worshipping the State: How Liberalism Became our State Religion* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2013), 172.

¹⁰ Ronald Dworkin, *A Matter of Principle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 350.

¹¹ For extended defense see Dworkin’s *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978) and *Sovereign Virtue: The Practice of Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

¹² D.A.J. Richards, *Sex, Drugs, Death, and the Law* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), 9. Emphasis in original.

¹³ William A. Galston, ‘Liberalism and Public Morality,’ in Alfonso J. Damico, ed., *Liberals on Liberalism* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986), 143.

¹⁴ For helpful analysis of D.A.J. Richards’ liberal conclusions on pornography legislation see Robert George, *Making Men Moral: Civil Liberties and Public Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 142-147.

¹⁵ A strictly logically consistent version of nomoneutrality would put an equal sign between nomoneutral and morals legislation. As Justin Buckley Dyer observes, “Without transcendent basis from which to judge the decency of competing civic ideals, there seems to be no reason (other than preference) to privilege liberal ideals over illiberal ideals” (*Natural Law and the Antislavery Constitutional Tradition* [Cambridge, 2012], 28). However, nomoneutralists do not argue that their efforts to realize greater nomoneutrality should be viewed as being in legal normative equality with the acts of morals legislation.

¹⁶ Consider, as a case-in-point, the argument of Pennsylvania Representative, James Greenwood (the 1998



Biotechnology Industry Organization Legislator of the Year). During the 2001 floor debate on human cloning Greenwood stated, "I am not prepared as a politician to stand on the floor of the House and say, I have a philosophical reason, probably stemmed in my religion, that makes me say, you cannot go there, science, because it violates my religious belief. I think it violates the constitution to take that position" ("Speech" at the House of Representatives from *Congressional Record*, July, 31, 2001, reprinted in *The Future is Now: America Confronts the New Genetics*, eds. William Kristol and Eric Cohen [Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002] 292-294: 292). Greenwood then closes his argument: "It is a very legitimate and important and historic debate about how it is that we are able to use the DNA that God put into our own bodies, use the brain that God gave us to think creatively, and to employ this research to save the lives of men, women and children in this country and throughout the world and to rescue them from terribly debilitating and life-shortening diseases" ("Speech," 294). Note well that a "philosophical reason, probably stemmed in my religion" represents a constitution-violating imposition of morality when that reason fosters warrant for a legal ban on cloning. However, such philosophical reasons stemmed in religion are fair game for Greenwood when marshaled in support of pro-cloning legislation.

¹⁷ J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2011), xiii. Lon Fuller detected the same tactic a half century earlier, "There is indeed no frustration greater than to be confronted by a theory which purports merely to describe, when it not only plainly prescribes, but owes its special prescriptive powers precisely to the fact that it disclaims prescriptive intention" ("Positivism and Fidelity to Law: A Reply to Professor Hart," *Harvard Law Review*, 71 [1958]: 630).

¹⁸ R.C. Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 165-166.

¹⁹ *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: Random House, 1954), 18.

²⁰ *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 44, Emphasis added.

²¹ *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 80.

²² Sproul observes, "It is odd that Nietzsche complains about the 'dishonesty' of traditional morality. Apparently he thinks honesty is a transcendent virtue that is normative even for the master.... Even while attacking herd morality, Nietzsche retreats behind one of the virtues he is trying to overcome." (*Consequences of Ideas*, 166).

²³ *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 24-25.

²⁴ *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 23-25.

²⁵ One salient distinction between Nietzsche and contemporary liberalism is the latter's frequent appeal to Mill's 'harm principle' which is intended to circumscribe the individual's expression of autonomy in ways that would not limit Nietzsche's superman.

²⁶ *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 81.

²⁷ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: Random House, 1954), 579.

²⁸ For such Nietzschean celebrations of power in contemporary jurisprudence see Robin Wright, "Three Positivisms," in *Jurisprudence Classical and Contemporary: From Natural Law to Postmodernism*, eds. Robert Haymen, Nancy Levit, and Richard Delgado (St. Paul, MN: West, 2002), 140-147.

²⁹ Dostoevsky, *The Possessed* (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2009), 365-366

³⁰ Francis Schaeffer, *How Shall We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1983), 245.

³¹ As Robin Wright observes, "Our desires have corrosive affects on our moral sense, and our moral sense is profoundly impacted by our legal norms" ("Three Positivisms," 146).

³² Harold Berman, *Faith and Order: The Reconciliation of Law and Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 370. Soviet virtues included, according to Article 3 of the Fundamental Principles of Court Organization of the U.S.S.R., "devotion to the Motherland and the cause of communism... care for socialist property, observance of labor discipline, and honorable attitude toward public and social duty."

³³ Personal interview, conducted July 5, 2014 in Las Flores, CA.



³⁴ According to Harry Schaffer, "Socialists and Communists of all shades and leanings believe in the perfectibility of all mankind. Man is basically good and capable of being master of his own destiny" (*The Soviet System on Theory and Practice* [New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965], 30). For theological analysis on this point see Thaddeus Williams, *Love, Freedom, and Evil: Does Authentic Love Require Free Will?* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 77-81.

³⁵ Jeffrey D. King, dir., *BLUE* (Broken Hints Media, 2014), 24-29:30. My purpose in this article is not to enter into the ecological debates regarding the effects of the logging industry or environmental legislation with regard to the northern spotted owl. My point is illustrative to approach the deeper anthropological point that legislation that fails to adequately understand the nature of those it is intended to help will achieve ironic results.

³⁶ Aquinas clarifies that the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and love "cannot be acquired by human acts, but are infused by God... Only the infused virtues are perfect and deserve to be called virtues absolutely... The other virtues, those, namely, that are acquired, are virtues in a restricted sense" (*Summa Theologica*, Q65, A1-3, 862-863).

³⁷ Mortimer Adler adds, "The Christian philosopher goes further than the moral philosopher in developing the theory of virtue. Considering man's limitations and his fallen nature, he holds that more than all the natural virtues (i.e., the virtues which men can attain by their own effort) is required for salvation—for the supernatural end of eternal happiness. Faith, hope, and charity...[are] gifts of God's grace (*The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World*, eds. Mortimer Adler and William Gorman, Vol. 2 [Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. 1980] 976).

³⁸ For further analysis of meaningful choice-making power, with points of contact between Calvinist and Arminian theologians that justify significant unity on the point above, see Thaddeus Williams, *Love, Freedom, and Evil: Does Authentic Love Require Free Will?* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011).



A NEW THEOCRACY

Politics and Law as Irrepressible Religiosity

Dr. Thaddeus J. Williams

In 1981, Francis Schaeffer released *A Christian Manifesto*, a believer's riposte to *The Communist Manifesto* and *Humanist Manifesto*. Schaeffer opens his manifesto, "The basic problem of the Christians in this country in the last eighty years or so, in regard to society and in regard to government, is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals."¹ Schaeffer cites the American church's hand wringing over sexual perversion, secular indoctrination in public education, the assault on family life, and the trampled rights of the unborn. "But," Schaeffer laments, "they have not seen this as a totality—each thing being a part, a symptom, of a much larger problem."

Three years prior, Alexander Solzhenitsyn delivered his seminal (and for many, feather-ruffling) commencement speech at Harvard. Like Schaeffer, Solzhenitsyn argued that addressing society's problems at the surface of legal and political categories, rather than root moral and spiritual categories, "prevents one from seeing the size and meaning of events" and "makes space for the absolute triumph of absolute Evil in the world."² Eighty years before that, at Princeton University, Abraham Kuyper began his now famous Stone Lectures with the observation that there are "two life systems wrestling with one another, in mortal combat." The combatants, according to Kuyper, were modernists seeking to "build a world of [their] own from the data of the natural man, and to construct man himself," striving to vanquish "with violent intensity" those "who reverently bow the knee to Christ." This Kuyper saw as "*the* struggle in Europe" and "*the* struggle in America."³

The "bits and pieces" approach that Schaeffer criticized, the myopic "legalism" that Solzhenitsyn rejected, and the failure to reckon with the epic worldview showdown that Kuyper saw raging behind the headlines remain just as relevant in the early 21st century as they were in the late 19th and 20th centuries. They beckon us to behold a bigger picture, to see through to the issues behind the issues of our day. For Schaeffer,

¹ FRANCIS SCHAEFFER, *A CHRISTIAN MANIFESTO* 1 (1981).

² ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN, *A World Split Apart*, Commencement Speech At Harvard (1978).

³ ABRAHAM KUYPER, LECTURES ON CALVINISM 11 (1999). Emphasis In Original.



Solzhenitsyn, and Kuyper that fundamental issue is, in a word, *worldview*, the behavior-shaping belief systems surrounding the perennial questions of metaphysics (what is real?), epistemology (how do we know what is real?), and ethics (how should we live in light of what we know about what is real?).

IRREPRESSIBLE RELIGIOSITY

Let us bring the Apostle Paul into the conversation. For Paul, worldview is foundational, yes, but there is a still deeper issue. That is the worship issue, the question of ultimate commitments, who or what we elevate as the *summum bonum* not merely in theory, but in real life. At this bedrock spiritual level, according to Paul's argument in Romans 1, there are two, and only two, options—Creator-worship or creation-worship.⁴ The question is not *whether* we are worshipping. Worship is an inevitable fact of human existence. "Man," according to Dostoyevsky, "has no more constant and agonizing anxiety than find as quickly as possible someone to worship."⁵ The real question is, 'Who or what do our thoughts, emotions, and actions say is the most important thing in existence?'

A growing congregation of scholars is catching up with Paul's ancient insight. Serious students of western civilization from a vast range of disciplines are increasingly seeing worship (often beyond the pale of traditional "religion") as a dominant motive force in our culture. Economist Bob Goudzwaard argues that everyone "absolutizes" something. We all serve god(s), take on the image of our god(s), then build society in our (that is, in our gods') image.⁶ Feminist author, social critic, and atheist professor Camille Paglia concurs, "Human beings need religion, they need a religious perspective, a cosmic perspective. And getting rid of the orthodox religions because they were too conservative has simply led to [a] new religion."⁷ Paglia identifies this new religion as "political correctness." She labels it a form of "fanaticism," citing her experience with second-wave feminists, whom she likens to "the Spanish Inquisition" seeking to "destroy" her for committing "heresy." Culture commentator Andrew Sullivan also recognizes the religious undertones behind what are typically considered

⁴ For a superb theological and cultural analysis of this point see PETER JONES, *ONE OR TWO?* (2010) and *THE OTHER WORLDVIEW* (2015).

⁵ FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY, *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*, 297-298 (1978). David Foster Wallace echoes, "In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism... Everybody worships. The only choice we get is *what* to worship" (*This is Water*, Commencement Speech at Kenyon College [2005]).

⁶ BOB GOUDZWAARD, *AID FOR THE OVER-DEVELOPED WEST*, 114-115 (1975).

⁷ CAMILLE PAGLIA, *FEMINISM: IN CONVERSATION WITH CAMILLE PAGLIA*, interview with Claire Fox, Institute for Ideas, 47:50-48:30 (November 4, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y3-KIesYRE>, retrieved September 26, 2017.



secular spaces in our society. Sullivan notes that “once-esoteric neo-Marxist ideologies—such as critical race and gender theory and postmodernism, the bastard children of Herbert Marcuse and Michel Foucault—have become the premises of higher education, the orthodoxy of a new and mandatory religion.”⁸ Anthropologist Paul Hiebert sees a new “dominant religion in the West.” Says Hiebert, “A new Western religion emerged to offer us meaning based on self-realization, not forgiveness of personal sins and reconciliation with God and others. Self had become god and self-fulfillment our salvation.”⁹

We would do well to wake up to this reality. The most pressing cultural, political, and legal issues of our day are, fundamentally, worship issues. They are contemporary expressions of humanity’s irrepressible religiosity. To ignore this Pauline insight is to limit ourselves to “bits and pieces,” miss “the size and meaning of events,” and render ourselves oblivious to “*the struggle*” in the West.

Creation-worship is nothing new. This is one reason for the frequent New Testament warnings against false gospels.¹⁰ These warnings came not from the cool abstraction of ivory towers, but from the context of real first-century communities confronted with real first-century heresies. The Philippians and Galatians reckoned with the Judaizers’ synergistic gospel of salvation by circumcision. The Colossians grappled with proto-Gnostic asceticism, and the recipients of John’s epistles faced an incipient Docetism. As time rolled on, the church encountered new pseudo-gospels to subvert—the Montanist’s gospel of salvation by ecstatic experience, the Pelagian’s gospel of salvation by the moral competence of creaturely freedom, and more. Interpreting today’s rising movements through the Pauline lens of worship opens our eyes to see competing political ideologies for what they are—false gospels. They promise salvation, but can never deliver. They leave millions missing out on the only One who can bring actual redemption to broken systems and the broken people who make them. Taking humanity’s irrepressible religiosity seriously helps us not only engage legal issues, but, like Paul and the historic church at its best, expose the idols of our age and their powerlessness to save.

⁸ ANDREW SULLIVAN, *America Wasn’t Built for Humans*, NEW YORK MAGAZINE (September 18, 2017).

⁹ PAUL HIEBERT, *TRANSFORMING WORLDVIEWS: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF HOW PEOPLE CHANGE* 170 (2008).

¹⁰ See Matt. 24:15; Acts 20:29-31; Rom. 17:17-18; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Cor. 11:4; 2 Tim. 4:24; 2 Pet. 3:16-18.



“NOT A GAME”

Before clarifying the doctrines of the new religion, we need Schaeffer’s reminder:

I need to remind myself constantly that this is *not a game* I am playing. If I begin to enjoy it as a kind of intellectual exercise, then I am cruel and can expect no real spiritual results. As I push the man off his false balance, he must be able to feel that I care for him. Otherwise I will end up only destroying him and the cruelty and ugliness of it all will destroy me as well.¹¹

Schaeffer spent his career analyzing and engaging culture. He was known to weep often for a generation that had been held captive by destructive philosophies and heretical theologies. In doing so, Schaeffer followed in Paul’s footsteps, the Apostle who said “*with tears* that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ” (Philippians 3:18, emphasis added). Paul was imitating Jesus, who entered Jerusalem, saw people “harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd,” and lamented (Matt. 9:36).

To lament for those who have succumbed to the trending religions of our day requires us to see them as image-bearers of God with irreducible value. If God is our object of worship in reality and not merely in creed, then we will see and engage his image-bearers *as image-bearers*.¹² Our methods and motives will expose our innermost allegiances. If we play by the rules of the *zeitgeist*, then our analysis will be little more than a self-righteous exercise in dehumanizing those we disagree with, expanding the chasm between a tribalized “us” and a demonized “them.” This ‘new normal’ is not only incompatible with the gospel (in which our righteous standing is based solely on our position in Christ, not our political position), but also with Jesus’s anti-tribal Commission (not suggestion) to *go* into the world with that good news (Matt. 28:19).

We are talking about ideas that have real consequences for real people. It is easy to be self-righteously tickled by problems in the ideology of others. It is much more difficult (and requires supernatural help) to be genuinely and even tearfully

¹¹ FRANCIS SCHAEFFER, *THE GOD WHO IS THERE* 127 (1968). Emphasis added.

¹² In other words we must consciously reverse the trend observed by Andrew Sullivan when he says, “Liberals should be able to understand this by reading any conservative online journalism and encountering the term ‘the left.’ It represents a large, amorphous blob of malevolent human beings, with no variation among them, no reasonable ideas, nothing identifiably human at all” (supra note 8).



concerned that someone created to know and enjoy God in Christ has been taken in by a false gospel. Spirit-generated love becomes the driving motivator for the cultural analysis and engagement of the Creator-worshipper.

THE POSTMODERN PRIMER

Before getting into the specific doctrines of the new religion, there is one more question to ask. Why now? Why do our religious appetites seem to be expressed with such escalating political zeal in the 21st century? I have developed these themes elsewhere, but briefly, Western culture has been living under postmodernism for half a century, give or take, and postmodernism is dull.¹³ As Solzhenitsyn saw, “the human soul longs for things higher, warmer, and purer than those offered by today's mass living habits.”¹⁴

In other words, postmodernism is deeply out of sync with human nature. It clashes with our deepest drives and most pressing existential needs. When God constructed the human *telos* He designed us to run and thrive on meaning. We are wired for objective, not subjective, Creator-formed, not creature-fabricated, transcendent and God-centered, not transient and self-oriented meaning. Christian theism offers something worth living and dying for. It is centered on Someone infinitely bigger and more interesting than ourselves. The postmodern fixation on the Self offers us, in the final analysis, nothing worth living or dying for. I do not mean in the final *abstract* analysis, as in, if we were to build logical syllogisms from the core premises of postmodernism, they would all eventually converge on the conclusion that life is meaningless. I believe that to be the case. However, I am arguing that the postmodern project is not merely a philosophical failure. It has also proven void of meaning in the real lives of real people.¹⁵ This is essential to understanding our current religious crisis. We crave a meaning that is bigger than ourselves and the postmodern *ethos* can never provide such meaning. Thus, postmodernism has a shelf life.¹⁶ Deprive a culture of transcendent meaning long enough and that culture will take to politics with the

¹³ See *Beyond Capes and Cowbells* (Fall 2014) and *Post-Postmodernism* (Fall 2016) in JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN LEGAL THOUGHT, and Chapter 2 of REFLECT: BECOMING YOURSELF BY MIRRORING THE GREATEST PERSON IN HISTORY (2017).

¹⁴ Solzhenitsyn, *supra* note 2.

¹⁵ Solzhenitsyn adds, “If humanism were right in declaring that man is born only to be happy, he would not be born to die. Since his body is doomed to die, his task on earth evidently must be of a more spiritual nature. It cannot be unrestrained enjoyment of everyday life. It cannot be the search for the best ways to obtain material goods and then cheerfully get the most of them. It has to be the fulfillment of a permanent, earnest duty so that one's life journey may become an experience of moral growth, so that one may leave life a better human being than one started it. It is imperative to review the table of widespread human values. Its present incorrectness is astounding” (*Id.*)

¹⁶ See WILLIAMS, *Beyond Capes and Cowbells* 8.



ferocity of an absolutist religious fanatic. *Akrasia* begets activism. Relativism begets radicalism. In Dostoyevsky's words, "Unlimited freedom begets unlimited despotism."¹⁷

History demands that we do not take this phenomenon lightly. Historian Richard Evans has argued that the young men of 1920s Germany who were drawn to violent extremism "weren't looking for ideas, but meaning... a pick-me-up to restore a sense of personal significance."¹⁸ "Violence" Evans argues, "was like a drug for such men."¹⁹ "Hostility to the enemy *de jour* — Communists, Jews, whomever — was the core of their commitment."²⁰ As Christian Piccolini, ex-White Nationalist and founder of Life After Hate, commented after the recent racist demonstrations in Charlottesville, "I believe that people become radicalized, or extremist, because they're searching for three very fundamental human needs: identity, community and a sense of purpose."²¹

Elizabeth Corey recognizes similar undercurrents in the rise of the intersectionality movement, which she identifies as...

...a quasi-religious gnostic movement, which appeals to people for precisely the reasons that all religions do: It gives an account of our brokenness, an explanation of the reasons for pain, a saving story accompanied by strong ethical imperatives, and hope for the future. In short, it gives life meaning.²²

This bestowal of meaning is precisely what religion offers that postmodernity cannot. Subject our meaning-craving human nature to a few decades of intense meaning deprivation and you have a compelling answer to the question, 'why now?'

¹⁷ FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY, *THE POSSESSED* 365-366 (2009).

¹⁸ JIM FRIEDRICH, *AMERICAN DEMONS: THE HORROR OF CHARLOTTESVILLE*, (August 13, 2017), <https://jimfriedrich.com/category/protest/> retrieved September 26, 2017.

¹⁹ RICHARD J. EVANS, *THE COMING OF THE THIRD REICH* 220-221 (2004).

²⁰ *Supra* note 18.

²¹ MAQUITA PETERS, *A Reformed White Nationalist Speaks Out On Charlottesville*, NPR (August 13, 2017), interview available at <http://www.npr.org/2017/08/13/543259499/a-reformed-white-nationalist-speaks-out-on-charlottesville>, retrieved September 22, 2017.

²² ELIZABETH COREY, *First Church of Intersectionality*, FIRST THINGS (August 2017), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/08/first-church-of-intersectionality>, retrieved September 21, 2017. Corey adds, "It posits a classic orthodoxy through which all of human experience—and through which all speech must be filtered. Its version of original sin is the power of some identity groups over others. To overcome this sin, you first need to confess, i.e., "check your privilege." And subsequently live your life and order your thoughts in a way that keeps this sin at bay. The sin goes deep into your psyche, especially if you are white or male or straight, that a profound conversion is required."



A CREATION WORSHIPER'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

We can now better appreciate the doctrinal convictions sweeping through culture. Borrowing from the taxonomy of systematic theology, in particular, Theology Proper, Anthropology, Hamartiology, Soteriology, and Eschatology, I sketch the shape of today's secular faith. (It is only a sketch, as a full doctrinal exposition would require a multi-volume Secular Systematic Theology text as long as Aquinas's *Summa* or Barth's *Dogmatics*.)

One challenge of clarifying the theology of today's emerging religion is that it is hardly a monolith. In his article "Millennials are in Election Hell Because Politics Has Become Their Religion," Peter Burfeind identifies this rising religion as a rebooted Gnosticism.²³ (On Gnosticism, see P. Andrew Sandlin's helpful piece in the current issue.) Paglia identifies it as "political correctness." Elizabeth Corey dubs it "the church of intersectionality." New York University social psychologist Jonathan Haidt labels it an "extremely intense, fundamental social justice religion." Other monikers like "cultural Marxism" and "neo-paganism" occur with frequency in the literature.

Indeed, there are multiple "denominations" with a wide range of dogmatic emphases. Nevertheless, there are strong theological threads that tie these denominations together, a discernable mere orthodoxy. In describing this shared theological core, I opt for the term Contemporary Western Creation-Worship, a Romans 1:25 inspired designator that captures what I take to be the root doctrine from which the diverse denominations sprout.

Theology Proper and Anthropology. Historic Christianity has always affirmed the Creator-creature distinction. One of the many distinctions between God and us is his unique, authoritative role in determining *that* humans would exist (we are contingent; he is not), and also *why* we exist. The built-in meaning of human nature, what we exist *for*, our *telos*, traces its origin to our transcendent Creator. Human nature is not

²³ Burfeind is following renowned political philosopher Erik Voegelin. See Voegelin's *THE NEW SCIENCE OF POLITICS, ORDER AND HISTORY, AND SCIENCE, POLITICS AND Gnosticism* (1968). According to Burfeind, "Voegelin identifies six characteristics of the gnostic psychic mechanism. (1) It begins with a dissatisfaction with one's situation. (2) Lacking a doctrine of original sin, the drawbacks of one's situation are attributed not to anything in him, but rather to the constitution of the world, or even nature itself, at a minimum to the intrinsic corruption of the world's systems and institutions. (3) Contrary to all evolutionary evidence, but faintly recalling the paradisaical Eden of traditional religion, the gnostic "just knows" salvation is possible, that the world can be changed into something special. (4) For this salvation to occur, the order of being itself must be changed in a historic process. As Voegelin writes, "From a wretched world a good one must evolve historically." (5) This historical change in the order of being lies within the capacity of human action. (6) Knowledge, or gnosis, here becomes the central concern, for only one enlightened about history's proper course can help spearhead the world-historical change" (*Millennials Are In Election Hell Because Politics Has Become Their God*, *THE FEDERALIST* [November 17, 2016]).



like a bowl of alphabet soup—a senseless jumble of floating letters that can be arranged at our leisure. Human nature is more like a book—we are *authored* beings with meaning and purpose. Authoring the meaning of human nature is a God-sized task.

In Contemporary Western Creation Worship, by contrast, the author of our *telos* is, unsurprisingly, the creature. As Ru Paul put it in a recent interview with *Time*, “Drag has always served a purpose. We mock identity. We’re shape-shifters. We are God in drag. And that’s our role to remind people of that.”²⁴ Under this doctrinal tenet, the autonomous “I,” the self-creating self, takes the sovereign mantle of man-making that God held in traditional theology. Solzhenitsyn describes it as “the proclaimed and enforced autonomy of man from any higher force above him.” (In this sense, the new secular religion is as old as Adam.)

The doctrine of self-creation was once the domain of professional philosophers. Nietzsche had his *ubermensch*, Sartre his dogma that “existence precedes essence,” and Foucault his “technologies of the self.” Then come movements in Critical Theory, particularly Critical Race Theory, Queer Critical Theory, and the recent upsurge of so-called “Dignity Jurisprudence” (See Roberta Ahmanson’s helpful piece in the current issue). This erasing of the Creator-creature distinction, the fundamental redefinition of our species from the made to the makers, has since spilled from the ivory towers and flooded virtually every square inch of Western culture.²⁵ And the indoctrination begins early.²⁶

There is a problem with this doctrine that, despite constant propaganda to the contrary, is becoming increasingly apparent in the West. The omnipotence-demanding task of constructing an entire person’s nature is forced onto our all-too-shaky and finite shoulders. Tragically, we buckle under the impossible weight. (And churches are called to serve as trauma recovery centers for those crushed by the mainstream credo of self-construction.) As I argue elsewhere, it is not a coincidence that the meteoric rise of the gospel of autonomous self-making since the 1960s corresponds with a crescendo of brokenness. “From 1960 to the turn of the 21st century, America doubled

²⁴ RU PAUL. *Time* 100 (April 19, 2017).

²⁵ Sociologist Thomas Luckmann, noticed this rising trend back in the 1960s. “The individual,” says Luckmann, “is left to his own devices in choosing goods and services, friends, marriage partners, neighbors, hobbies and... even ‘ultimate’ meanings in a relatively autonomous fashion. The consumer orientation, in short, is not limited to economic products but characterizes the relation of the individual to the entire culture” (THE INVISIBLE RELIGION 98 [1967]).

²⁶ For example, an episode entitled *We’re All Potatoes at Heart* from the animated Disney Jr. show “Small Potatoes” concludes with a talking potato telling a vast audience of impressionable minds, “I think it’s great to be different and unique because then everyone has their own different way of doing things and there’s no wrong or right answer for doing something.” As Augustine quotes Horace in THE CITY OF GOD (1.3), “new vessels will for long retain the taste of what is first poured into them.”



its divorce rate, tripled its teen suicide rate, quadrupled its violent crime rate, quintupled its prison population, sextupled out-of-wedlock births, and septupled the rate of cohabitation without marriage (which has been established as a significant predictor of divorce)."²⁷ I am not arguing that shifting the weight of self-making from the Creator to the creature's shoulders is the exclusive factor in these unnerving statistics. But, if we take seriously Paul's Romans 1 argument about the disarray that ensues from creation-worship, then we would be missing something profound if we limit ourselves to a sociological (at the exclusion of a spiritual) account of our present brokenness.

To offset the weight of this autonomy, many turn to other finite creatures to validate their self-made selves. The collective "We" is invoked to do some of the existential heavy-lifting that the autonomous "Me" can not muster. For deeply spiritual and not mere social reasons, people seek universal celebration of their constructed identities. This takes us to the soteriological doctrines of Contemporary Western Creation-Worship.

Hamartiology and Soteriology. In Christian soteriology (doctrine of salvation) we find the doctrine of justification. Justification refers to, among other things, the divine act whereby God declares a sinner "not guilty!" on the basis of Christ's redemptive death and resurrection. God is the Judge, Satan is "the accuser," and Jesus is our Defense Attorney who appeals to his own completed death sentence so we can be declared not guilty. If we leave God out of the process of living free from guilt, then where must we turn for that authoritative declaration? We turn to the next biggest entity we can imagine. We turn to Society. Media, the law, education, entertainment, the local business owner—we must get *everyone* to declare us, in unison, "not guilty!" We must demonize and silence anyone who fails to acknowledge and celebrate our guiltlessness. The Little Sisters of the Poor, the baker, the photographer, and the Christian University become the collective functional equivalent to Satan and his minions in an historic Christian demonology.

Psychologists, according to Elizabeth Nolan Brown, have found that the kind of moral outrage we typically classify as altruistic "is often a function of self interest, wielded to assuage feelings of personal culpability for societal harms or reinforce (to

²⁷ WILLIAMS, REFLECT 73 (2017). For careful documentation of these unnerving facts see DAVID MEYERS, THE AMERICAN PARADOX (2000). There is also the 400% rise in antidepressant use from 1988 to 2011 documented by the U.S. Center for Disease Control ("NCHS Data Brief, No. 76 [October 2011]).



the self and others) one's own status as a Very Good Person."²⁸ This constant imputation of guilt to others—*they* are the bigots, *they* are the phobics, *they* are the fascists—offers a subjective sense of something very close to (and yet infinitely far from) what Christ offers in the Gospel. It offers those in a perpetual state of outrage "status as a Very Good Person" in Brown's terms, a forensic declaration of imputed righteousness in the language of the Reformers. Note well, this false means of declaring ourselves "not guilty" often occurs among Christians on the Right. Rather than our justification coming from Christ, and Christ alone, we seek our own "not guilty" verdict by transferring all guilt onto the Left. (With the alt-right, which is anti-Gospel to its rotten core, justification takes on nationalistic and racist overtones, in which all evil can be imputed to those with more melanin in their skin cells.)

Embedded in this secularized view of justification, we find a doctrine championed by the French Revolutionaries that remains an essential dogma of Contemporary Western Creation Worship. In Jean Jacques Rousseau's words, "Man is naturally good... It is by our institutions alone that men become wicked."²⁹ Abraham Kuyper clarifies the main point of departure between this secular faith and historic Christianity, "two absolutely differing starting points." That point of departure is whether we view man "in his present condition as normal, or as having fallen into sin, and having therefore become abnormal."³⁰ For abnormalists, like Jeremiah, Solomon, and Paul, the human heart is desperately sick (Jer. 17:9), full of moral insanity, (Eccl. 9:3), and dead in transgressions and sins (Eph. 2:1). Those who recognize such abnormality...

...maintain the miraculous as the only means to restore the abnormal; the miracle of regeneration; the miracle of the Scriptures; the miracle in the Christ, descending as God with His own life into ours ; and thus, owing to this regeneration of the abnormal, they continue to find the ideal norm not in the natural but in the Triune God.³¹

²⁸ ELIZABETH NOLAN BROWN, *Moral Outrage is Self-Serving, Say Psychologists*, REASON.COM (March 1, 2017).

²⁹ See LETTERS TO MALESHERBES IN THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF ROUSSEAU, vol. 5, Ed. Christopher Kelly, 575 (1995); OEUVRES COMPLÈTES, vol. I, Eds. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, 1136 (1995). As Solzhenitsyn noted in his 1978 Harvard speech, "Such a tilt of freedom in the direction of evil has come about gradually, but it was evidently born primarily out of a humanistic and benevolent concept according to which there is no evil inherent to human nature. The world belongs to mankind and all the defects of life are caused by wrong social systems, which must be corrected" (supra note 2).

³⁰ Kuyper, supra note at 132, 54.

³¹ *Id.* at 132.



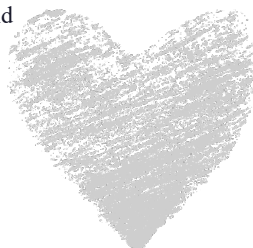
If, however, we are unfallen, then humanity “moves by means of an eternal evolution from its potencies to its ideal.”³² This clarifies ways in which #loveislove and #lovewins have become defining slogans of the new religion. What is presupposed and then *imposed* is a normalist account of human nature. You must corroborate and celebrate my happiness *as I currently conceive of happiness in all of my unfallen perfection*. Anything less is bigotry. From an abnormalist perspective, by contrast, love is not constricted to always say ‘be who you are.’ It can also say ‘*become* who you are’ when that needs to be said. It is a love, like God’s, that can passionately and zealously pursue the beloved’s redemption and flourishing. Love can only be redemptive if we are in need of redemption (i.e., abnormal/fallen).

Kuyper’s normalist/abnormalist distinction captures one of the deepest rifts in contemporary faith, why we often talk past one another. Recall the driving thesis of evolutionary zoologist Alfred Kinsey in the mid-20th century. Every sexual drive and behavior becomes justified as “normal mammalian behavior.” The scientific community eventually rejected Kinsey’s spurious research. His normalist worldview assumptions about human sexuality, however, have risen over the last fifty years to become cardinal dogmas of the Western mainstream. This occurred largely through the work of 20th century thinkers like Herbert Marcuse with his *Eros and Civilization* (1955), Paul Goodman with *Growing Up Absurd* (1960), and Norman O. Brown with *Love’s Body* (1966). “We knew that at bottom their gospel, was a sexual one,” says one scholar of Marcuse, Goodman, and Brown, “that sex was their wedge for reorienting all human relations.”³³

When Paul describes the move from Creator to creation-worship, one of the first places that this self-destructive exchange expresses itself is in the realm of human sexuality. How does the new sexual orthodoxy, the legacy of Marcuse, Goodman, and Brown, relate to Paul’s insight? One helpful way to answer that question is with the doctrine of divine impassibility. In historic Christian theology, the Creator-creature distinction entails that the Creator is impassible and we the creatures are not. The doctrine of impassibility is not that of an unfeeling, statuesque God, as often caricatured, but a God who feels perfectly. The Creator lacks the

³² *Id.*

³³ MORRIS DICKSTEIN, *GATES OF EDEN: AMERICAN CULTURE IN THE SIXTIES* (1977). Philip Yancey counters, “I might feel more attraction towards a reductionistic approach to sex if...I senses that the sexual revolution had increased respect between the genders, created a more loving environment for children, relieved the ache of personal loneliness, and fostered intimacy. I have seen no such evidence.”



emotional volatility we find in creatures.³⁴ God's feelings are just, unerring, and authoritative.

With this historic definition of impassibility, we can better clarify the sexual orthodoxy of our age. When the Creator-creature distinction is erased, we ascribe impassibility to ourselves. We elevate our own feelings, including our sexual feelings, to sacred status. Historically, ascribing unquestionable authority to one's own feelings was considered arrogance. It is now called "authenticity."³⁵ In Kuyper's categories, it is the "normalist" view writ large. Just as God's feelings in traditional theology are expressions of his very nature, so our feelings come to define our very identities.³⁶ Colin Campbell clearly captures this dogma:

The 'self' becomes, in effect, a very personal god or spirit to whom one owes obedience. Hence 'experiencing,' with all its connotations of gratificatory and stimulative feelings becomes an ethical activity, an aspect of duty. This is a radically different doctrine of the person, who is no longer conceived of as a 'character' constructed painfully out of the unpromising raw material of original sin, but as a 'self' liberated through experiences and strong feelings from the inhibiting constraints of social convention.³⁷

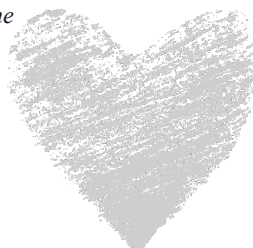
Eschatology. This leads us to the eschatological vision of Contemporary Western Creation Worship. Sin is no longer an internal category. (How, after all, could *telos*-defining, impassible deities of like us be in violation of a higher moral law if our desires *are* the highest moral law?) Sin must be found only "the institutions" according to Rousseau and the French Revolutionaries, or "the oppressors" in the categories of neo-

³⁴ Kevin Vanhoozer retrieves an old distinction that effectively makes the point. On the one hand you have passions, which are (as the name implies) passive and which often overrule reason and are subject to evil. On the other hand are affections, which are active, good (and which Vanhoozer explains in terms of cognitive concernedness that is theodramatic and covenantal). In short, God has affections but not passions. See Chapters 8-9 in VANHOOZER, REMYTHOLOGIZING THEOLOGY: DIVINE ACTION, PASSION, AND AUTHORSHIP (2010).

³⁵ For deeper analysis of this point see Ch. 2 "Emote," from my book, REFLECT.

³⁶ In the words of one proponent of the new orthodoxy, Alex Garner, "Our sexuality is *at the core* of our humanity" (quoted in JACOB ANDERSON-MINSHALL, *The New Gay Sexual Revolution*, THE ADVOCATE (May 15, 2017), <https://www.advocate.com/current-issue/2017/5/15/new-gay-sexual-revolution>, retrieved September 24, 2017). As Philip Yancey notes, "If humanity serves as your religion, then sex becomes an act of worship. On the other hand, if God is the object of your religion, then romantic love becomes an unmistakable pointer, rumor of transcendence as loud as any we hear on earth" (RUMORS OF ANOTHER WORLD, 88). In other words, sexuality is an inherently religious matter, the way we think about it and the way we engage in sexual acts will be an fundamental expression, consciously or not, of either Creator or creation worship.

³⁷ Colin Campbell quoted by Craig M. Gay in *Sensualists Without Heart: Contemporary Consumerism in Light of the Modern Project*, in THE CONSUMING PASSION, ed. Rodney Clapp 28 (1988).



Marxism. The great and final triumph over evil, then, becomes a triumph over any institution or oppressor who dares question the self-defined self.

What emerges is a kind of secular postmillennialism in which intersectional alliances of self-defined selves must mobilize for the great eschatological struggle. Cultural, political, and legal efforts become a spiritualized quest to usher in the new heavens and a new earth. This quest is every bit as eschatological and utopian as it was for the 18th century French Revolutionaries and the 20th century Marxists. But, we must say with tears, this new revolution also renounces the Creator-creature distinction. Drastically overestimating our goodness and underestimating our propensity for evil, it will prove just as dystopian.³⁸

“SAVE THE WORLD FROM SUICIDE”

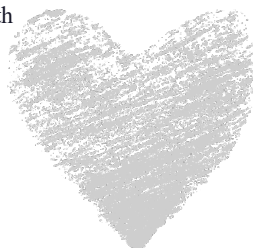
Above are some of what may be called “the Deep Dogmas” of Contemporary Western Creation Worship. There are also what we might call “Cosmetic Dogmas,” the attractive doctrines on the public face of the religion that draw converts (even many from the church). These Cosmetic dogmas sounds uncannily like the *shalom* the Bible envisions and the kingdom Jesus inaugurated. We want to help the poor and end oppression. We want a world forever purged of racism, where justice prevails and greed and tyranny are permanently replaced with compassion and love.

If we want to winsomely engage contemporary creation-worshippers we must make it abundantly clear that the Bible is anti-oppression to its core. It has inspired the Wilberforces, Bonhoeffers, Martin Luther King Jrs., and Lee Jong-Rak’s of history³⁹ to bring about justice. To mute the Bible’s clarion calls against oppression would be a travesty, particularly in this cultural moment. It would perpetuate a false dichotomy and drive anyone who cares about ending oppression into the arms of Contemporary Western Creation Worship, rather than toward the God of the Bible who commands (not suggests) that we “seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause” (Isa. 1:17).

The problem, then, is not with the quest for justice and the end of oppression *per se*. Such a quest is deeply biblical. The problem is what happens when the quest for justice is hijacked by the Deep Dogmas of Creation Worship. When we disavow the Creator, we unwittingly lose all that the Creator means for our humanity—our *telos*,

³⁸ I discuss this further in 2.1 of LOVE, FREEDOM, AND EVIL (2011).

³⁹ On Pastor Lee Jong-Rak’s heroic efforts to bring life and justice to the abandoned infants of modern day Seoul, South Korea see WILLIAMS, REFLECT 129.



our intrinsic and irreducible worth as image-bearers, a realistic sense of our fallibility, and our universal need for grace. (On the effects of this dehumanization in human rights law and personal data sharing, see Andrew DeLoach and Stephen Kennedy's articles in the current issue). Without the Creator-creature distinction, we fundamentally misunderstand human nature and end up the unwitting oppressors in our quest for liberation. Just study the effects of Marxism in the modern world.

To see what genuine Creator-worship offers the justice-seeker, consider Martin Luther King Jr. Like all Creator-worshippers, King was an abnormalist. He believed in the reality of human fallenness and, therefore, our need for supernatural grace as we seek a better world. In King's words:

By opening our lives to God in Christ, we become new creatures. This experience, which Jesus spoke of as the new birth, is essential if we are to be transformed nonconformists... Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit.⁴⁰

King's Creator-worship made him a clear-eyed realist about his own fallenness and perpetual need for grace. It prevented him from elevating himself as the supreme source and standard of righteousness.

With its Deep Dogmas of self-definition, normalism, human impassibility, and self-justification, Contemporary Western Creation Worship produces an altogether different kind of justice-seeker. For him, evil is ever lurking in systems of oppression, and never in his own heart. Paulo Freire's warning that "the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors"⁴¹ is totally lost on such a justice-seeker. His system of worship leaves no space for authentic introspection, no reason to ask for forgiveness, "no category of corruption within the heart to warrant self-critique."⁴² This is not a recipe "to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit," as King said. It is an impetus for the hubris and loathing that is presently ravaging the West.

Make no mistake; what is now unfolding in western law and politics is not a face-off between religious theocrats and freedom-loving secularists who seek a

⁴⁰ MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., *STRENGTH TO LOVE* 16 (2010).

⁴¹ PAULO FREIRE, *PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED* (1993). Marvin Frankel echoes, "The powerless call out for tolerance [which], achieving power, they may soon forget" (*FAITH AND FREEDOM: RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN AMERICA*, 111 (1994)).

⁴² WILLIAMS, *LOVE, FREEDOM, AND EVIL* 78.



religiously neutral state. What we are seeing is nothing less than a new theocracy. It is the dogmatic faith of Contemporary Western Creation Worship working to silence all heretics and enshrine itself as the only legal faith of the land. It is a faith in which the creature, not the Creator, defines the human *telos*. It is a faith with no holy God as a pride-deflating reference point to realistically assess our own fallenness and fallibility. It is a faith that projects all evil from our own hearts onto any institution that refuses to celebrate our autonomous identities. It is a faith striving to usher in a new heavens and a new earth, centered not on Christ but on Self, guided not by Saint Paul or Saint Peter, but by Saint Rousseau, Saint Marx, and Saint Marcuse. Make no mistake; it is a faith.

How do we engage its zealous practitioners? We do so with tears because we love them. And we do so with the same tried-and-tested method the church used with the Judaizers, Gnostics, and Pelagians of old. We preach “the Gospel once for all entrusted to the saints.” We herald the good news that only Jesus can define the human *telos* in the deeply meaningful ways that we cannot. We offer the good news that we no longer have to pretend, and force others to pretend, that we are perfect. Jesus is perfect, and through his substitutionary death for our evil, he offers a new identity as infinitely beloved sons and daughters of God. We preach the good news of his bodily resurrection, by which he inaugurated the age to come, with all of its *shalom* and justice that the West has tried to realize with such antithetical and oppressive effects. We preach the same Gospel that was able to bring real racial reconciliation to first century Jews and Gentiles, and real liberation to the slaves of American and British history. We preach the only gospel that offers real meaning to our generation of image-bearers created to know and enjoy God. To those gasping for air under the crushing weight of Contemporary Western Creation Worship, we preach the Gospel.

The world is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide.

—T.S. Eliot⁴³

⁴³ T.S. ELIOT, *Thoughts After Lambeth* in *SELECTED ESSAYS* 342 (1977). Perhaps Solzhenitsyn said it even better in the closing lines of his Harvard speech: “No one on earth has any other way left but upward... We will be a moral and Christ-loving people, or we will cease to be a people.”

